New Year Issue

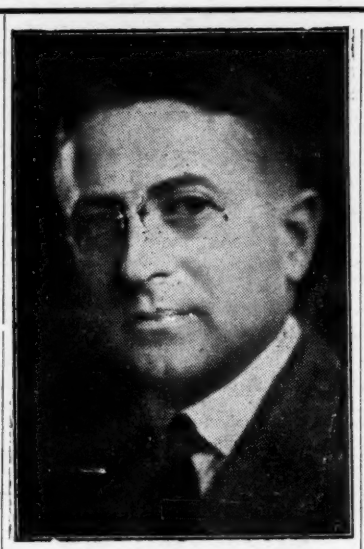
THE JEWISH POST

September 3rd, 1937

Judaism's Influence In The Founding Of The Republic

By RABBI MORRIS M. FEUERLICHT

Although the fact is not mentioned in the primary school text books, it is now well known to the historian that the Jew as an individual has contributed his due and even notable share in the founding and development of the American Republic. For informative and authentic details in this respect, the reader is especially referred to the thirty or more volumes of "Publications' thus far published by the American Jewish Historical Society. The contribution of Judaism, the Jew's religion, however, to the spiritual, philosophical and institutional phases of American democracy are unfortunately not so generally known. That there was such a contribution in fact and in a direct and fundamental sense has been ungrudgingly admitted by Lecky, Fiske, and other authoritative historians. President Coolidge, in a recent quotation, attributed to Lecky the statement: "The Hebraic mortar cemented the foundations of American democracy."



DR. FEUERLICHT

What the content and character of this contribution was is furnished by the Puritan forefathers of the Republic themselves. The Puritans lived in the light of the Bible. They loved and read their Bible not only as the basis of their religion, but also as the final arbiter and guide of their political and secular life. Accordingly, for them, the ideal and perfect form of government was theocracy. Not man, but God alone, could be King. And in the execution of their belief, they constantly appealed to the source-book of theocracy, the Old Testament, for argument and defense. The New Testament was virtually ignored. The hardy soldiers of Cromwell's army, as they read their Bibles in the nightly vigils of the battlefield, and fighting against what they believed to be an unholy alliance of faithless king and a persecuting nobility and priesthood, could find in the New Testament no models or figures comparable to the warriors and heroes of the Old Testament.

There was thus aroused among the Puritans a wide and vivid interest in the people of the Old Testament and their strange persistence. This interest was manifested in a variety of literary, religious and political forms. The study of Hebrew became general among their scholars; the Old Testament was studied exegetically and more intensively; an extraordinary number of Christian Hebraists flourished. Messianic expectations were re-born and re-emphasized, so that groups of visionaries, under a variety of names such as Fifth Monarchy Men, Millennarians, Levellers, or Ultra-Republicans, developed and spread. So tense and general, indeed, was the Jewish interest of this period in English history, that the proposal was seriously made by some of Cromwell's officers to re-organize the Council of State into a body of seventy members in order that it might accord with the number of the ancient Jewish Sanhedrin.

Brought To This Country.

In the Short, or Barebones Parliament, was a member, General Thomas Harrison, an Anabaptist, whose Party advocated the introduction of the Mosaic law as the law of the land. Cromwell himself, already friendly to Jews, had in mind a reconciliation of the Old and New Testaments, and the establishment of an intimate connection between the "Jewish People of God" and the English Puritan theocracy.

This was the Hebraic religious and political background in England, the mother country, from which the Puritan and Pilgrim immigrants came to settle New England. Both the Pilgrims at Plymouth and the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay had come to found a theocratic commonwealth "like that of the children of Israel in the good old days before their froward hearts conceived the desire for a King." The leaders of these colonies were not ignorants and untamed men, as occasional supercilious critics of our latter day would have us believe. They were, for the most part, men of superior education and intellect, graduates of either Oxford or Cambridge, and in a period when Christian Hebraists abounded. Governor William Bradford and Elder William Brewster were Hebraists and lovers of the Old Testament. Cotton Mather, himself one of the number, mentions the names of seventy-seven ministers who, having

(Continued on Page 2)

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Judaism's Influence In The Founding Of The Republic

(Continued from Page 1)

graduated and begun their work in England, later served as ministers in New England. To these, he adds the names of one hundred and ten others who were Hebraists and graduates of Harvard College in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Most notable in these lists of names are John Cotton, Richard Mather, John Eliot, Thomas Welde, Henry Dunster, Charles Chauncy, Samuel Whiting, Michael Wigglesworth, Thomas Thacher, Judge Sewall, Increase Mather, and Cotton Mather. Later came Ezra Stiles, President of Yale; also Samuel Johnson, first President of Columbia. Several of those mentioned above served as President of Harvard.

The order of studies in "The Laws of Harvard College" of 1655 required that "In the first yeare after admission for foure days of the week all Students shall be exercised in the studies of the Greek and Hebrew tongues, onely beginning logick in the morneing towards the latter end of the yeare....."

In order to qualify for the first degree, the requirement was:

"Every Scholler that upon proofe is able to read extempore the Pentateuch of (or) the new testament into latine out of the originall tongues, and be skilled in logick....."

Must Read Hebrew.

Whatever the motives of these early Puritans in the pursuit of the Hebraic studies, there can be no doubt about their Judaic results. The consequent interest in and love for the Old Testament, with its story of ancient Israel's tribulations and experience so much like their own, its priests and prophets, its legislation, its outlook upon life—all at the expense, more or less of the New Testament—was quite inevitable. The man in the street today knows perhaps that the American Thanksgiving holiday owes its origin to the influence of Judaism's Old Testament; but he is quite unaware that the whole political, legal, ethical and social life of the early Puritans was predominantly ininfluenced from the same source. In the year 1636, the Plymouth Colony, after renouncing the authority of English laws, adopted the Pilgrim Code whose foreword reads:

"It was the great privilege of Israell of old and soe was acknowledged by them, Nehemiah the 9th and 10th, that God gave them right judgments and true Lawes. They are for the mayne so exemplary, being grounded on principles of moral equitie as that all Christians especially ought alwaies to have an eye thereunto in the framing of their politique constitutions. We can safely say both for ourselves and for them that we have had an eye principally unto the aforesaid platforme in the framing of this small body of Lawes."

Follow Mosaic Law.

The Massachussets Colony adopted in 1647 a code, the Body of Liberties, drawn up by Nathaniel Ward, also a Hebraist, which was very much akin in important details to that of John Cotton, whose "Moses, His Judicials," published in 1641, almost exactly reproduced the laws of the Pentateuch; Old Testament precedents and models were used; and to each law was added a biblical citation. The Connecticut Code of 1650 was likewise drawn after tthe Mosaic model. The Colony of New Haven, adopted as the platform of its code in 1639 the following declaration:

"It was ordered that the Judicial laws of God, as they were delivered by Moses, and as they are a fence to the moral law, being neither typical nor ceremonial, nor had any reference to Canaan, shall be accounted of moral equity, and generally bind all offenders, till they be branched out into particular hereafter." So rigid was New Haven's platform of adherence to the Mosaic law that it refused to have trial by jury because no such thing could be found in the Pentateuch. Forty-seven out of the seventy-nine statutes in the New-Haven Code of 1655 derive their authority from both Old and New Testaments. Of these only nine are from both Testaments; while the remainder, or thirty-eight, are altogether from the Old Testament.

Lest it be judged, as often superficially and not altogether disinterestedly done, that the legalism of the Old Testament peculiarly lent itself to the supposed austerity of the Puritan temperament, it should not be forgotten, that the same Old Testament was used with equal force as the infallible source and sanction of toleration and liberalism. Roger Williams, America's first and uncompromising champion of civil and religious liberty, was a Hebraist and Old Testamentarian. So too, was Thomas Hooker, leading spirit of the three river towns in Connecticut whose confederation formed the nucleus of the New England Confederacy in 1684, and which in the opinion of some historians, became the real foundation of our American democracy. These two men, and others of their contemporaries, were inspired to protest against ecclesiasticism and to advocate the secularization of the civil power of the state by the same Old Testament from which their opponents had claimed a corresponding authority.

Credit Given To Bible.

It is not within the purport or province of this paper to inject the controversal; but it is only fair to recall that in passing judgment on the relative and respective influence of the Old and New Testaments on the rise of democracy, competent and unbiased historians have not hesitated to render their verdict on the side of the Old Testament. Lecky (Rationalism in Europe, revised edition, 1919, Vol. 11, P. 168) has observed: "To ascertain the true meaning of passages of Scripture is the business not of the historian but of the theologian, but it is at least an historical fact that in the great majority of instances, the early Protestant defenders of civil liberty derived their political principles chiefly from the Old Testament, and the defenders of despotism from the New. The rebellions that were so frequent in Jewish history formed the favourite topic of the one—the unreserved submission inculcated by St. Paul, of the other." De Laveleye, University of Liege, writing in similar vein, says "The Reformation..... was a return to primitive Christianity, and above all towards the democracy of the prophets of the Old Testament, which was alive with the breath of liberty and resistance to absolutism. It tended towards the birth of republican and constitutional institutions.'

This was particularly and conspiculously evident in the case of American democracy. In the days

(Continued on Page 7)

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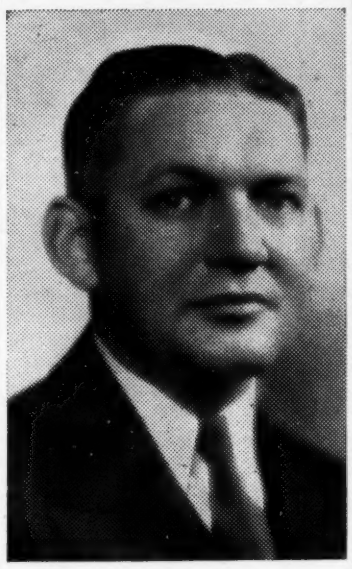
Jews Owe A Debt To Their Faith, Rabbi Shulman Says

By RABBI ALBERT M. SHULMAN
Temple Beth-El, South Bend, Ind.

* * *



RABBI SHULMAN

Our Debt To Judaism.

WHAT DOES the Jew owe to Judaism? We have heard of the debt the world owes the Jew; we have heard of the debt the Jew owes the world. Similarily we have heard of the great responsibility of the Jew to his co-religionists and on the occasion of the high holidays we are ever reminded of the debt that the Jew owes to himself. But what does the Jew owe to Judaism, his own faith—to that great historical body of thought, tradition and practice which has come down to him through these many centuries and which has shaped the spiritual outlook of the entire civilized world? What does the Jew owe to that spiritual development which has molded the thought of western man and which would have made this a much better world had its development not been arrested by those forces which are contrary to the spirit of all faith and religion?

First, we owe our faith the will to believe in its worth as a builder of character and its value as a God-inspired body of veritable principles all aimed for the preservation and upbuilding of society. As adherents to the Jewish faith all of us must believe in a way of life 'aiming at the union and perfection of mankind under the sovereignty of God'.

Second, we are indebted to our faith to the extent of acting according to its precepts. Jews must not violate the ethical essential of everyday life. All men should not —Jews must not violate the code of holy, just and righteous living! We owe it to our faith to practice the virtues exalted by our teachers, prophets, rabbis and sainted. No Jew, under any circumstances, may take advantage of his fellowmen. No Jew may be selfish or inhuman without being a traitor to the ideal of social justice which aims 'at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife'. And we owe it to Judaism to be faithful to its implications, loyal to its protestations, reverent to its achievements and hopeful of its future as even a greater power for good-living than it has been in the past.

Third, we owe it consecration—not only to believe in it and to live by it, but to dedicate ourselves to Judaism. We may differ as to dogma and creed in the interpretation of certain traditions and customs; we may take issue with the many problems arising from our faith, but with regard to the potency of Judaism as a social boon; with regard to its power as agency for human betterment; as a body of ethical precepts necessary to man's moral salvation, none can differ. Judaism is the mother of Western civilization and the source of the best teachings in the social pattern of mankind. Let us, therefore, consecrate ourselves to it and by faith and practice contribute our part towards it inestimable effectiveness. This is the least we can do for our religion which has done so much for us.

On this annual New Year of Jewish revival, let us renew our individual faith; let us confirm ourselves in our loyalty and consecrate ourselves anew to our inmortal heritage. Let us pay our debt to our religion and be exalted through the very act of payment. Judaism has much in store for those who would know it and who would live by it.

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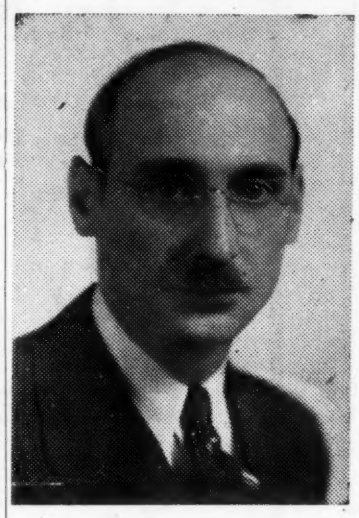
RABBI WEINGART SAYS JUDAISM NEEDS "HINENI" JEWS TODAY

Jewry Cannot Live On The Words "I Shall"

By RABBI IRVING A. WEINGART
Of Congregation B'nai Jacob, Fort Wayne, Ind.

ON ROSH HASHONAH we read the Biblical Portion relating the story of how God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his most beloved son, Isaac. It is written that when God called upon Abraham he answered, "Hineni, Here am I"—prepared to do Thy will, Thy command and behest'. We are further told that after Abraham stood the test, had displayed his willingness, God blessed him with life and posterity.

The significance of this tale is, that the blessings of life, happiness and even material possessions come only to the man who can answer at once when called upon—"Hineni"—"Here am I". Hineni, I have done my duty, I am ready to be judged, tried and tested. I



RABBI WEINGART

can face my Creator without fear or qualm.

On Rosh Hashonah we all assemble in our synagogues and temples and pray for a long and happy life. We pray for life with all its rewards. But are we worthy of the blessings of life? How many of us can answer to the call of life—"Hineni"—"Here am I". I have done and am doing my duty as a Jew. I have given my children a Jewish training, a fair knowledge of our religion, our history, our culture, our past civilization? How many can say that their homes were sanctuaries, temples of Jewish living and practice and not mere houses and dormitories? How many have answered Hineni to the call of Zionism and Palestine? Have we shared in the misery and suffering of Klal Yisrael? Have we felt an ache or pain? Did we sense the pangs of thousands of our brethren in Germany being ruined and millions of Polish Jewry being starved? Are not most of us unprepared to answer Hineni to the call of Jewish life to-day. Are we not shirking our duties and responsibilities for some future day? Morgen, Morgen nur nicht heute. I shall teach my children, I shall become a Zionist, I shall become active in the synagogue, I shall elevate myself, I shall contribute my work and funds to Jewish causes. I shall. But when? The when never arrives for some. The "I shall" leaves most of us empty shells. Empty and void of any ideal and any devotion to things Jewish. What Judaism needs to-day is Hineni Jews and not "I shall" Jews.

There is a story told about angels appearing before God on Rosh Hashonah with huge packs on their shoulders. "What are in these packs", asked the Almighty. These are unpaid pledges and unfulfilled promises, postponed duties and obligations", answered the angels.' Said the Almighty, "Grant the owners of these pledges and

(Continued on Page 6)

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CREAM OF GOLD ICE CREAM
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Best Wishes To Our Friends and Customers for a Happy New Year

Mindful of the significance of the Jewish New Year, we have taken time off to wish you health, happiness and prosperity during the coming year. The bond and understanding that exists between the people of the community have been strengthened during the past year, and our continued desire for harmonious understanding will create even greater unity during the New Year. We wish our Jewish friends and customers to know that our firms represent men and women whose feeling towards Jewry is one of extreme friendliness, and one that recognizes the good which each individual contributes to his city, state and country.

May we again extend to you best wishes for a year filled with health, happiness and prosperity.

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BIRTHDAY BIOGRAPHIES

Sultan G. Cohen Is In Charge Of All Contract Construction Of State Highway Commission

Possibly because he loves the out-doors so much is one of the reasons why Sultan G. Cohen has become so prominent in the profession of construction engineer. His career concerns various phases of the work and all of it has found him eager for the experiences which he encounters. Mr. Cohen was born in Jeffersonville, Ind., forty-one years ago, and received the B. S. degree in Civil Engineering from Purdue University in 1918. After his discharge from the army, where he was a lieutenant, he became Project Engineer for the Kansas Highway Department. Then he traveled to Texas where he was superintendent for a road building company, and was project engineer for the Texas State Highway Commission.

Building cities in the wilderness of Texas was perhaps one of the most thrilling of Mr. Cohen's adventures. On the edge of civilization he marveled at the rapid development and construction, and almost overnight it seemed that thriving cities arose to accommodate the hordes of people who were exploiting the oil. Recalling his work, he said, "I felt as if I were a pioneer of the old days, doing my part to make my country great."

In 1923, Mr. Cohen returned to Indiana to become the District Engineer of Construction for the Indiana Highway Commission, a position he held until 1929 when he went into private business as general contractor and producer of sand and gravel. He was so busy with other buildings that it was necessary for him to hire someone else to build his own home. He maintained his firm until 1933 when he was appointed Engineer of Construction for the State Highway Commission of Indiana, and since then has

SULTAN G. COHEN

been in charge of all contract construction performed by the Indiana Commission.

Mr. Cohen fully believes that the engineering profession is just as important as the medical or legal callings, and resents the ignorance of the ordinary layman regarding it. Certainly he is justified in his complaint as we look around and begin to enumerate all the conveniences which cannot be produced without a knowledge of engineering. Everything that changes a prairie into a modern city is accomplished through the use of engineering principles. Mr. Cohen enjoys his work because he can see what is accomplished—the fruits of his labors are massive constructions of concrete which remain a monument to his efforts.

Because of his close connection with the laboring class, Mr. Cohen is well-qualified to comment on the present upheavel. He said, "We are developing a reorganization that is basically sound, and our labor unrest is partly solved already . In time we will have a more lasting form of prosperity, and the standards of living will be raised. Those who don't respect the laborer are ignorant. So many people think that education goes with a white collar, but this is a misconception which should be corrected."

Although Mr. Cohen likes to go to new places and see different things, he is at home so little that he prefers to spend his leisure in his own city. He enjoys gardening, but only to the extent of picking the flowers which have been cultivated by his wife. Serving on the board of directors of the Zionist Organization, B'nai B'rith, and Temple Brotherhood, he tries to be as active as possible in these organizations. However, he is not an office holder because he realizes that it would be impossible for him to devote so much time to any one group. As president of the Indiana Society of Professional Engineers, his administrative talents are sufficiently exercised, for he is the leader of an organization which includes every licensed engineer in Indiana.

Mr. Cohen is an interesting person, for physically and mentally he personifies the spirit of his profession. His rugged strength and his acknowledgement of human rights and privileges have aided him to climb very high in his work, and yet he desires to study more, to learn more thoroughly all branches of his particular field. It is truly a wise man who is not content to rest on his laurels, but strives onward and upward.

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NEW YEAR

RABBI WEINGRAT SAYS

(Continued from Page 4)

promises conditional, promisory notes for life and happiness to be paid only when they pay theirs."

Let us remember then when we assemble in our synagogues and temples on Rosh Hashonah that Judaism and Jewry cannot live and thrive on "I shall", but resolve to become an "Hineni"—"Here am I"—Jew. When the shofar will beckon, be prepared to accept the Hineni attitude. To-day, I pledge myself to all the ideals and worthy causes of Israel. Then will the blessings of life and happiness for us and for all Israel be granted.

MEDIEVAL REMAINS FOUND

BASEL—Archaelogical remains have been accidentally discovered here indicating that a large Jewish community existed in Basel as early as the eleventh century. Workers digging the foundations of a new university building found a large number of tombstones with strange inscriptions. Archaeologists who examined the stones found they were inscribed in Hebrew and belonged to an Jewish cemetery of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

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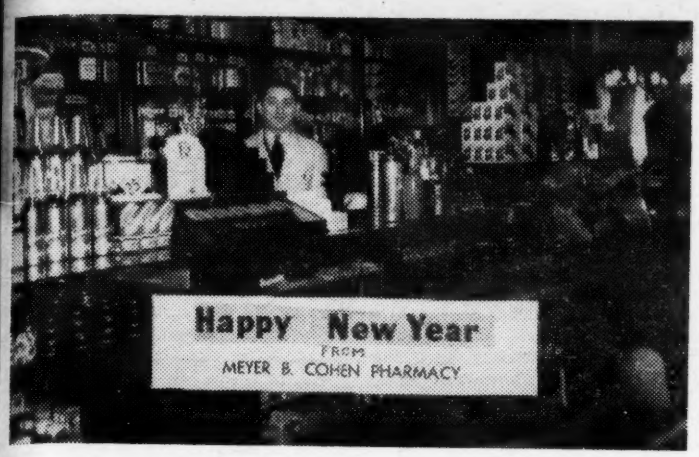

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Happy New Year

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Your Family Barber
Wishes all his friends
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New Year Greetings
Baking Made Easy With E-Z Bake

Made In Indiana

Judaism's Influence In The Founding Of The Republic

(Continued from Page 3)

of the early settlers' fight for American independence, the Bible continued to be the popular and infallible source of authoritative inspiration and support. But again interestingly enough, as in the Puritan days, not the New Testament, but the Old. "Prudence, indeed, with dictate," reads the Declaration of Independence, "that Governments long established should not be exchanged for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed." Then follows a long citation of detailed causes, each and all warrant enough, to be sure, in the mind of the Revolutionary leaders, for a change of government. But in order that the people at large be thoroly convinced of the complete rightness of such a change, it was necessary to prove that these causes were ample not merely as matters of actual political and economic fact, but also in point of fundamental religious and moral theory. It was necessary in the premises to convince the people not only that the King had done them certain indisputable and vital wrongs, but also that the whole theory of the Divine Right of Kingship and Unlimited Submission to Kings was wrong. In which of the two Testaments were these proofs to be found? The defenders of despotism," to repeat Lecky's phrase, found their authority in the New Testament; the defenders of liberty, in the Old. Over and over again, the defenders of the old order turned to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter XIII: 1-7—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation..... et seq." With no less vehemence and frequency, the defenders of the contemplated revolutionary change repeated the Old Testament stories of Samuel's answer to Israel's request for a King (I. Sam. viii), of Gideon's declination of the offer of Kingship (Judge viii: 22,23), of Jethro's counsel to Moses (Exod. xviii). The politico-theological literature of the Revolutionary period is full of analogies, references and texts of the Hebraic and Old Testament history, all designed to direct the mind of the people away from king and unlimited submission, in favor of the Revolution and the Republic. Chief among these, were the "election sermons" and pulpit pronouncements of such eminent preachers as Jonathan Mayhew, Samuel Langdon, President of Harvard College; Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College; George Duffield, of Philadelphia; Samuel West and Simeon Howard of Boston. All of these, between the years 1750 and 1783, took advantage of every available opportunity to extol the Hebrew commonwealth, viewed in a civil light, as the most perfect model of republican government for America.

Paine Used Bible Passages.

But perhaps the one man who, more than any of his contemporaries, succeeded in a literary way at least in swaying the popular mind to the side of freedom was Thomas Paine. Tho virtually ignored by the elementary text-books of today, and bitterly hated by many of his own day, Paine was yet admired and praised by Washington, Franklin and other notable contemporaries, for the powerful assistance his pen was rendering the cause of the Revolution.

Paine was no friend of revealed religion or the Bible, either Old Testament or New. Yet, recognizing the widespread popular interest in the Old Testament, he did not hesitate to use it to advance and fortify his arguments for freedom. In his pamphlet, Common Sense, which according to authoritative contemporaries was the most effective of all the propaganda for the Revolution, he centered his strongest argument against Monarchy on the Old Testament stories of Samuel and Gideon. He quoted the stories verbatim, and then concluded: "These portions of Scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchial government is true, or the Scripture is false....." The mere fact that so unfriendly a critic could, shrewdly enough have found the Old Testament so invaluably useful for his purposes, is itself perhaps the most conclusive evidence of that Testament's influence on the popular mind of his day.

That influence was more than merely rhetorically symbolled by the familiar words from Leviticus inscribed on the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim Liberty throughout the Land until all the inhabitants thereof," (Lev. xxv, 10). These particular words were not placed there—as many loosely believe—only a few days before, as a sort of peculiar clever and appropriate quotation in definite anticipation of an immediate signing of the Declaration of Independence. The quotation had been there since 1753, almost a quarter of a century before the Declaration was signed, and furnishes an added bit of interesting testimony to the persistence not only of the colonial hopes for freedom, but also of the definite Old Testament influence that inspired them. On the afternoon of the day when it was agreed that the Declaration of Independence be adopted, a committee, consisting of Franklin, Jefferson and John Adams, was appointed "to prepare a proper device, for a Seal for the United States of America." They reported a device, which while not finally adopted, very clearly visualizes the extent of Old Testament influence on American history and American destiny as the generation of which these great men were a part conceived. Their proposed design presented Pharoah, with sword in hand, seated in a chariot, and pursuing the Israelites through the dividing waters of the Red Sea. On the farther shore, already safely landed, stood Israel and Moses under the rays of a pillar of fire. Moses, extending his hand over the sea, causes its

(Continued on Page 8)

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Judaism's Influence In The Founding Of The Republic

(Continued from Page 7)

waters to overwhelm Pharoah and his host. Surrounding the seal at its edge, were the words: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

Role Important.

There is ample ground, therefore, for holding that Judaism, through certain of its Old Testament phases at least, played a no inconsiderable role in the founding of the American Republic. To what extent Judaism, as an historical religion and a theological and ethical system developing out of and beyond the Old Testament, may have influenced the founders of the Republic is of course a matter always open to speculation. That Judaism, however, did have its influence in the same sense as might be made by any corresponding claims of Christianity, is strongly attested by the biographies and writings of the founders themselves. The dominant philosophy of the eighteenth century, particularly in our American Revolutionary and Constitutional period, was Deism.

Except Washington, who is usually regarded to have been formally an Episcopalian, the chief among the founders of the republic acknowledged themselves to be either Deists or Theists. Franklin, Jefferson and Paine were Deists, although they were variously dubbed free-thinkers, infidels and even athiests by many of their contemporaries; John Adams and Madison were Theists, or as they should be termed today, Unitarians. All were strongly anti-ecclesiastical; all were believers in natural, as contra-distinguished from revealed religion. Judaism, in so far as it is anti-Trinitarian, is close to Deism; in its spiritual outlook and moral system, it is closer to Theism.

Typical of the Deistic views of this period is the following statement of Benjamin Franklin's repeated several times with slight embellishments in his writings: "I had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian; and though some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, etc., appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful, and I early absented myself from the public assemblies of the sect, Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and governed it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service to God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter....."

This set of religious principles reads almost verbally like those presented in Kohler's Guide to Judaism; and with the possible exception of the idea of "Israel's Mission"—which Franklin would quite naturally and logically have confused with the Presbyterian doctrine of "election"—it might easily enough pass for a catechism of Judaism as prepared by medieval and modern rabbis. Franklin, like Paine, knew the Old Testament well in translation at least, and like him too, was clever enough to use it—more genially, however—for his purposes. He loved to paraphrase it occasionally in order to prove his conception of the meaning of certain passages. He altered the Book of Job into a satire on English politics. While in England, he wrote his famous "Parable against Persecution" — originally derived from the Rabbinical work "The Rod of Judah" (Shebet Jehudah). This Parable was intended—and was exceedingly effective—as an argument in favor of religious liberty. It was perfectly written in the style of the Authorized Version, and he learned it by heart so that whenever a discussion of the subject arose in a social gathering, he would open the Bible and recite it as the last, or fifty-first Chapter of Genesis. The guests would admire it and naively say that they had never before known that there was such a Chapter in Genesis.

Early Presidents And Jews.

Most significant, perhaps, of Washington's contacts with Jews and Judaism are the three letters he wrote in reply to the greetings of the several congregations on his accession to the Presidency. The one written to Newport is of special historical importance because of its emphasis on religious toleration as an inherent human right rather than as a matter of mere sufferance. But the letter to the Savannah Congregation is the only one of the three containing what may be said to have been a direct expression of his attitude toward Judaism.... "May the same wonder-working Deity, who long since delivered the Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, planted them in a promised land whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent nation, still continue to water them with the dews of heaven and make the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessing of that people whose God is Jehovah...." There is here a reminiscence of the earlier Puritan conviction of Judaic and Old Testament influence on American and world history. Ezra Stiles indeed was so impressed with this particular passage that he quoted it in his Literary Diary, and appended the comment: "Hence Wash. a Revelationist"—with the purpose of course, of calling the example of Washington to the attention of the Deistic opponents of revealed religion.

James Madison was a Hebraist; but of what quality or degree, we do not know. After graduating from Princeton in 1772, he spent an extra year there for the special study of Hebrew. On the occasion of two Synagogue dedications—one in 1818, the other in 1820—when the dedication addresses were sent him, he wrote acknowledgements stressing his well-known views on religious equality, but included also the comment: "The history of the Jews must forever be interesting. The modern part of it is at the same time so little generally known, that every ray of light on the subject has its value." Jefferson in acknowledging receipt of one of these same dedication addresses, wrote: "I have read the address with pleasure and instruction, having learnt from it some valuable facts in Jewish history which I did not know before..... The prejudice still scowling on your section of our religion, although the elder one, cannot be unfelt by yourselves....." The Virginia Act for Religious Liberty, fathered by Jefferson and carried through to enactment by Madison in 1785, had a tremendous influence not only in the subsequent incorporation of its principle into the Federal Constitution and the constitutions of the several states, but also on the mind of France and of Europe generally.

This act was important from the Jewish viewpoint, not alone because it embodied the principle of religious toleration, but also because, in the mind of Madison and Jefferson at least, it was designed to establish the religiously non-Christian and non-sectarian character of America. It was passed over the violent opposition of a group led by none other than Patrick Henry, who had proposed a resolution that—"the people of the Commonwealth according to their respective abilities ought to pay a moderate tax or contribution for the support of the Christian religion, or of some Christian church, denomination or communion of Christians or of some form of Christian worship." This resolution, whose purpose was to exclude all but Christian sects, had already passed its second reading before Madison, with extraordinary propaganda and activity, was able to oppose and defeat it with his own Act of Toleration.

Adams Very Sympathetic.

Of all the founders of the Republic, the most explicitly sympathetic in his attitude to Judaism appears to have been Adams. In a letter written in 1809, he said.... "In spite of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other naton. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the Universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality and consequently of all civilization....."

Here speaks the Old Testament Puritan passing through and emerging from the crucible of eighteenth century Deism. The two major forces more immediately responsible for the building of the American Republican emanated, geographically, from New England and Virginia. Both, however, were rooted in the Bible: the one, through Puritanism, in the Old Testament; the other, through the established Church, in the New Testament. The confluence of these two currents, joined with Deism, created that spiritual and social philosophy we love to call America. Certainly, then, it would seem eminently fair to claim for Judaism a definite and distinctive influence in the founding of the American Republic. This influence operated through the spiritual and moral force of the Old Testament, as contra-distinguished from the New, and, a little less directly, through the philosophic momentum provided by Deism which so closely resembled the attitude of Judaism.

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